

In my view these Guidelines are far more stringent than is reasonably necessary for the protection of public health. In every case where reasonable doubt could be entertained, it has been resolved in a way that imposes the most serious and conservative protective requirements. Most of the risks in question are purely conjectural and no substantive basis can be found for the dire prediction that the public health could be endangered by recombinant organisms. Nevertheless, the Guidelines in their present form have accepted every such speculation as if it were accepted reality. In summary, even the most cautious view of the NIH Guidelines should give citizens ample assurance that they go far beyond what is necessary to protect their health.

Elsewhere I have commented that the very act of setting up such elaborate precautions would frighten people because they go so far beyond what we do in other spheres of life. This seems to have happened in the present case—it is the very security precautions having been doubled and redoubled that has generated an unjustified fear. On the other side of the coin, I take the opportunity to indicate that research in this area has the potential for the most extraordinary contributions to medical advance and I would hope that Cambridge, Massachusetts would be proud to be the seat of major accomplishments in this direction.

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